

Spying no job for press

WE HAVE TO say one thing for CIA Director Stansfield Turner: The man has guts. No coward could have stood before a convention of newspaper editors and told them that the agency has every right to press journalists into service as CIA operatives.

Admiral Turner indicated to the editors that he could not really see any validity in their arguments against the Agency's policy. He even suggested that he would expect any reporter approached to go along with the proposal. "I think a lot of correspondents are patriotic enough to do this," the jingoistic admiral noted.

Turner seems to lack any respect or understanding of the role of the press

abroad. It is vitally important to Americans that foreign correspondents be able to gather news in as free and unrestricted an environment as possible. If reports begin to come out that newspeople are being used as Agency lackeys, it will severely impair the work of all journalists in other countries.

When Iran threw U.S. journalists out of the country, the action appeared to the world as unjustified and arbitrary. If Turner had his way, Iran would have had every right to expel the journalists: Any country that discovers spies in its midst can justify ridding itself of them. We can only hope that Turner does not succeed in his goal of calling all journalists' integrity into doubt.